



NEWS ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, December 5, 2012

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Youth, service providers, and state officials to explore supports for youth aging out of foster care at Thursday conference

What: “Success Beyond 18” is a conference that will bring together youth in foster care, service providers, researchers, and policymakers to discuss how Connecticut can help youth in the care of Connecticut’s Department of Children and Families to make a successful transition to adulthood.

When: Thursday, December 6 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Where: Old Judiciary Room, State Capitol, Hartford

Who: The forum is sponsored by Connecticut Voices for Children (www.ctvoices.org), the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative (www.jimcaseyyouth.org), and the Center for Children's Advocacy (www.kidscounsel.org). Speakers will include:

- **Connecticut youth in foster care:** Latasha Myers, Brian Beltran, Khaliyl Lane
- **State agency leaders:** Commissioner Katz, Dept. of Children & Families; Commissioner Rehmer, Dept. of Mental Health & Addiction Services; Chief Judge Wolven, Juvenile Court; Christine Spak, Dept. of Education
- **Legislators:** Rep. Toni Walker, Sen. Terry Gerratana, Rep. Diana Urban
- **Policy leaders:** Hope Cooper, Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative; Sharon Langer, CT Voices for Children
- **Researchers:** Dr. Mark Courtney, Chapin Hall, University of Chicago
- **Providers and social workers:** Hector Glynn, Village for Children and Families; T.J. Michalski, Youth United for Survival; Ralph Zona, Dept. of Children and Families, retired
- **Leaders from other states:** Leslie Heimov & Lindsay Elliott, Children’s Law Center of California, Cathy Utz & TaWonda Jones Williams, Pennsylvania Dept. of Public Welfare

Why: A growing body of research suggests that children who “age out” of the foster care system without long-term relationships with parents and mentors face a myriad of problems, including increased risks of dropout, unemployment, homelessness, and lack of health insurance. When these

children turn 18 and the State's legal responsibility for them ends, many struggle with their sudden independence and loss of support.

The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, signed into law in 2008, provides federal financial support to states that extend services to youth in foster care up to age 21. Until 2008, federal financial support to states caring for children in foster care ended at age 18. Over the past four years, states have begun extending services to these older youth, based on an increasing body of evidence demonstrating that strategic investments in supporting and educating young people transitioning to adulthood are essential to the success of adolescents and their communities. This conference will provide a forum to discuss how to ensure that Connecticut youth emerge from care with the skills and strengths necessary to succeed in their adult lives.

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